

**City of Belmont
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING AUGUST 3, 2011
MINUTES**

The regular meeting of the Belmont Parks & Recreation Commission of August 3, 2011 was called to order at 7:06 p.m. at the Belmont City Hall Council Chambers.

I. ROLL CALL

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair (CC) Cheechov, Vice Chair Davis, Commissioner (C) Andrews, Bortoli, King, Wright and Sullivan

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Youth Commissioners Zakeri and Bartee

STAFF PRESENT: Parks and Recreation Director (PRD) Gervais, Recreation Manager (RM) Brunson, Recreation Supervisor (RS) Handley and Secretary (S) Saggau

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

C King moved, seconded by C Davis to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of June 1, 2011. Vote 7-0 in favor.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION/COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

C Davis complimented staff on the Fall Recreation Activity Guide.

C Bortoli reported on the Senior Advisory Committee Meeting. The lunch program is doing well and meeting more than the minimum attendance required.

C King reported the Park Boosters had a very successful concert series. They plan to renovate the concession stand. They hope to replace the 25-year old stage cover but this may have to be done with income from two series.

C Andrews reported on the Sports Advisory Committee meeting. The landscape architect for the synthetic turf project, Callander & Associates, has set dates to meet with staff, the sports groups, the Park & Recreation Commission and the City Council. The Committee also discussed the possible tri-city adult softball collaborative program.

C Sullivan stated the Tree Ordinance prepared by AD-Hoc Tree Committee will be going for a first reading to the City Council. He noted there have been some changes since it was presented to the Parks & Recreation Commission and it would be on the August 9, 2011 City Council agenda.

C King said that she visited several of the National Night Out sites and they were very successful and expects it to grow as more people know about it.

CC Cheechov asked if staff responded to an email sent to the Commission on a participant's concern with a recreation class not meeting her expectations. PRD Gervais said that staff talked to the instructor and the participant and believes the issue has been resolved. RM Brunson added the main concern from this person was that the class description did not model what was done in the class and after meeting with staff was assured that would be corrected in the future. The customer did participate in the class and appeared happy with the overall experience.

IV. AGENDA AMENDMENTS

None.

V. OLD BUSINESS

None.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Update on Recreation Programs

PRD Gervais explained staff would give a presentation on recreation programs with the focus on the partnerships they have built. He noted the importance of engaging the community and getting the community to view the department as the provider of recreation programs.

RM Brunson noted the department's general mission statement is "*Enhancing the Quality of Life for the Community*". This is accomplished with enrichment classes and programs, community partnerships, lifelong learning opportunities for seniors and recreation facilities made available to the public.

RM Brunson reviewed the four primary services centers.

- Recreation Programs
- Day Care Center
- Senior Services
- Recreation Facilities

RM Brunson noted the significant strides made in revenue collected from 2007 to 2011.

RM Brunson said the department has community partnerships with the Belmont Library, Footsteps, School Districts and many others.

PRD Gervais explained that revenue figures reflect the increase in participation. He added that partnerships make it possible to offer more to the community. He noted that staff included the following questions in the staff report for the Commission:

- Adult Softball – Can the city partner with San Mateo and Foster City to provide adult softball?
- Day Care – Should this be a City of Belmont program?
- Facility Rental Program – How to increase facility rentals?
- Senior Center - How to increase participation?
- Summer Camps – Should the City partner to run traditional summer day camps?
- Aquatics Program at Carlmont – Can the City afford to maintain the program?

Staff responded to Commission questions:

- Partnerships work in two different manners. The city rents the facility for some programs but the majority of recreation classes have contract instructors that provide services for the City and the class registration is received by the Department.
- Revenue collected goes back to the general fund but money comes from the general fund to cover the expenses. Some programs such as Senior Services will not generate a lot of revenue but are provided to the community. The goal is to decrease the support required by the general fund for recreation programs.
- Percentage increases in participation from FY 10 to FY 11: Recreation Programs - 21%, Day Care - 14%, Senior Services - 21% and Facility rentals - 5%

C Davis requested that staff provide charts providing the number of people participating and not just the revenue.

C Wright suggested staff collect data on the number of new enrollees, number of residents vs. non-residents, and average number of classes taken by participants.

RM Brunson noted 50% of the revenue generated and participation takes place in the summer. This includes the aquatics program which has a lot of non-resident participation from San Carlos and Redwood Shores residents.

CC Cheechov questioned since the Day Care program generates a lot of revenue for the City if someone else runs the program would the City would lose this income. PRD Gervais explained the Day Care Center's expenses are very high because of the costs of salaries and benefits. CC Cheechov added she would like the Center to continue as it is a necessity for working parents.

C Andrews asked if the Community Learning Center rates are much lower than private ones in the area. PRD Gervais explained rates used to be a lot less but have been consistently raised and are now only approximately \$100-300 below the average with full time care costing approximately \$1,000 month. RM Brunson noted there is now a PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization) and that the general supplies budget has not increased in the last four years even though the number of children has increased by 10. The PTO does fundraising and provides funds for enrichment programs and facility improvements for the Center.

RM Brunson pointed out that overall expenditures are down about \$20,000 and revenue is up \$215,000 from FY10 to FY11.

C Bortoli questioned if the costs of the aquatics program was significant compared to the revenue and if rates should be raised. RM Brunson explained staff is working on getting a long term lease agreement for the pool rental so that this fee can be maintained at a certain level in order to balance the program budget. He noted significant staff time is spent on this program which has not been factored in. PRD Gervais added hiring staff for this seven-week program has been a challenge. RM Brunson explained prices are competitive but the fact that this is an outdoor pool has to be factored, as there are several indoor pools in the area.

Karen Haas-Foletta, Executive Director of the Footsteps After School Program (formerly Cipriani After School Care) spoke to the Commission about this program. Footsteps is a private, non-profit child care program that rents space from the School District. They have about 50 employees and they serve approximately 400 children a day; infants through middle-school. Their sites include Ralston Middle School, Nesbit School, Cipriani School and the Redwood Shores elementary school. They also have a small program at Barrett Community School where they partner with the City of Belmont. She added the Park & Recreation Department does a good job and has been a great partner with several programs including the Halloween event, Middle School Camp, Barrett Program and use of the swimming pool. She noted she would not want the City to lose the pool program. She meets regularly with the Recreation staff and explained that the City and Footsteps assist each other by advertising each others activities. She expressed thanks to the City and the Commission for this partnership.

C Davis thanked Ms. Haas-Foletta for attending the meeting. He asked if she is able to hire Belmont residents. She replied quite a few of the staff live in Belmont but also come from other cities too. She noted that they are a licensed child care center so they must hire people that can meet the state requirements.

RS Handley distributed the Senior Tales Newsletter to the Commission. RS Handley stated the Senior & Community Center serves seniors of various ages ranging from 50 to over 90. Activities available include Trips & Tours, Twin Pines Café, numerous health screening, classes, games, movies, special events, special interest groups and fundraising. The Center has many volunteers assisting the staff.

RS Handley noted partnerships are also utilized to provide services to the community. Some of the programs offered by partnerships include trips, health screenings, flu shots, health insurance counseling services, and driving programs. This fall new partnerships with Stanford Audiology will offer a hearing loss program, Senior Advocates will offer financial safety and the Red Cross will offer a neighbor to neighbor workshop.

PRD Gervais added there will be some staffing changes in the Senior Center. RS Handley will increase her hours from 24 to 32 hours per week. Three current part-time positions will be combined into one position. This will create consistent staffing in the Senior Center.

PRD Gervais noted the Commission received an email from HUGS Director Barbara Fetterly; another department partnership.

Responding to C Wright's question RS Handley estimated 100 seniors per day come to the Center. Some come daily and others come for specific activities. Belmont residents and non-residents participate at the Center, approximately 30% from other cities.

C Bortoli added, while serving as a Senior Advisory Committee member, he has noticed that the Department is willing to try any type of class to see how it works out and that this helps attract people to the Center.

C Sullivan thanked staff for the update and report on the recreation programs. Responding to questions in the staff report he would like to keep a full range of programs in Belmont. He would agree that softball may be just as well served partnering with other cities. He suggested the Day Care issue be discussed in more detail at some time, noting it is a necessity for many. He acknowledged the cost of benefits for day care staff should be considered. C Sullivan said he was glad the Senior Center does so well and agreed it is a valuable service for the community. He said he had mixed feelings on the pool as it is great to have a town pool but the expense may need to be addressed.

C Davis agreed that a partnership for Adult Softball makes sense. Concerning Day Care he agreed there should be a comprehensive review of the program. He suggested that installing a kitchen in the Sports Complex may increase rentals in that facility. He noted to increase participation in the senior center it needs to come from the seniors to find out why they are not participating and consider the pricing and programs. C Davis expressed strong support for providing an aquatics program so that there is an opportunity for children to learn to be safe in water and it is also a great exercise program.

C Wright spoke in support of providing Day Care that is more affordable and questioned if there are any subsidies available for lower income people. She questioned if tuitions were increased if rates could be income-based. C Wright said she thinks that many people are not aware of the Redwood Picnic Area and suggested that a sign be installed in the park so people know its location.

C Andrews stated he thinks the Recreation Department has enhanced itself during the time he has been on the Commission and that the partnerships offer a lot of quality programs that were not available before.

C Bortoli agreed that programs are going in the right direction. He spoke in support of combining softball with other cities, noting players may enjoy playing on some other city's fields. He figured the Day Care rates can be competitive and noted renting the facility may make more sense financially but expressed concern with laying off city staff. Because of this he would prefer to continue with our Day Care program. He suggested advertising to increase facility rentals and agreed with adding a kitchen facility at the Sports Complex. To increase participation in the Senior Center the seniors need to reach out to other seniors to attract people to the Center. C Bortoli said the city seems to have summer camps going on and if there is a need partnerships could be considered. He spoke in support of keeping the Aquatics Program at Carlmont and noted the importance of negotiating with the School District.

C King thanked staff for all of their efforts. She concurred with the comments of Commissioners Davis & Bortoli.

C Sullivan added after hearing other Commission comments he is now in favor of keeping the pool program.

b. Update on the Open Space Trails

PRD Gervais stated there would be an update on the trail work around Water Dog Lake and discussion on the trail system and open space issues. He noted Belmont has a lot of open space, approximately 335 acres, for a small town of 4 ½ square miles.

C Sullivan displayed a map showing the open space in Belmont and other surrounding areas. He pointed out the trail areas where work has been completed and showed slides of the work in progress. He showed the progress on a new wider trail that is being built around the lake further from the lake edges that would be easier for all to use.

C Sullivan explained it takes some time to plan and make progress on the trails. He noted they must dig when it's wet.

C Sullivan provided the history of the progress on the trails in the open space areas. Volunteer trail builders completed much of the work and continue to assist with the trail maintenance. C Sullivan said that Belmont Patch has assisted with recruiting volunteers to assist with the work.

C Sullivan noted things that need to be considered when planning trail building:

- Not building trails too steep
- Proper sight lines for passage
- Avoiding water erosion
- Avoiding sensitive areas such as wood rats nests
- Not disturbing natural native plants and trees
- Selecting views where people will enjoy the natural setting

The goal of the trail maintenance is to keep them open and safe and to provide fire suppression.

PRD Gervais thanked C Sullivan for his presentation. He noted people need to care about these areas. The maintenance and trail building was completed by volunteers and we need to increase the advocacy for these open spaces. He noted there have been presentations to the Commission relating to managing open space that covered fire danger and invasive species. He stated there is a lot to manage these open spaces and commended C Sullivan and the volunteers for their commitment to this work. He emphasized the need to keep the resources and attention that open space needs.

Responding to C Wright's question PRD Gervais said that appropriate compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was completed for the trail work.

C Wright suggested the City sponsor guided hikes to help publicize the trails. PRD Gervais said he would like to start a hiking club. C Sullivan added he would like to get more of the trail users to get involved. He noted many of the trail building volunteers were bike riders and he would like to expand the types of volunteers to meld the community to help avoid conflicts between different types of users.

VII. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

A. Questions and Comments

PRD Gervais reported the following:

- Barrett Playground project has been completed.
- A draft of a sign to be posted at Davey Glen Park will be ready to review soon. There will be a space by this sign to post upcoming meetings. C King requested that in addition to the sign she would like a 500' notification for an on-site meeting at the park site.
- Bids received for the Dog Park project came in over budget so it will be redesigned removing some elements and possibly taking out the fence. The Department has heard some complaints about people with children walking through the dog park to get to the athletic field so a separate pathway may be created. Staff will rebid this project in the winter with construction planned for the summer of 2012. C King & Cheechov requested the Commission see the revised drawings.
- Staff has met with College View Avenue area residents to discuss redoing some landscaping in the island in that neighborhood next spring.
- The Tree Ordinance is on the City Council agenda of August 9, 2011.
- The new Public Works Director – Afshin Oskoui started on July 18th.
- The opening of the Bike Bridge was scheduled for September 28th but may be postponed to a future date.
- Crystal Springs Uplands School may be moving into the Davis Drive Area.

B. Future Agenda Items

Belmont Sports Complex
Davey Glen Update
Survey Results
City Attorney – Brown Act

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Jonathan Gervais
Parks & Recreation Director